

REPORT

OF THE

ACTING MANAGER

OF THE

DANVILLE & POTTSVILLE

RAIL ROAD COMPANY,

MADE JAN. 28, 1841.

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TO THE PRESIDENT AND MANAGERS OF THE DANVILLE
AND POTTSVILLE RAIL ROAD COMPANY.

GENTLEMEN:

IN a communication which I made to the President in September last, I stated the difficulties which existed in the early part of the season, (when I first took the superintendence of the road,) and which prevented our commencing operations until the 19th of May.—From that period until the closing of the navigation of the Susquehanna by ice, nothing occurred to prevent the regular trips of the locomotives; and all the coal that was mined by the several operators was promptly taken to Sunbury.

The quantity was not so great as was anticipated; or as was wished to be sent by the operators: but the diminution of quantity was not occasioned by anything in connection with either the rail road or the engines. A contract for ten thousand tons of coal to be delivered at Danville had been made, the delivery of which was arrested by the stoppage of the canal on the North Branch in the early part of July, and the canal was not again opened until the middle of October, thus leaving a very brief period for the use

of boats in that direction, and preventing the fulfilment of this contract by more than seven thousand tons.

The dam across the Susquehanna at Sunbury, has been for a long time in bad order, and when the waters become low, the levels between this point and Duncan's Island are invariably deficient. After the first of August the boats were not only prevented from taking full loads, but were so long detained as materially to affect the trade; being kept nearly as long again in making their trips as would otherwise have been necessary. These difficulties were the more felt from the want of boats on the Susquehanna: to supply the deficiency it is believed five hundred boats more will be required. From these several causes there has been at least seven thousand dollars less received in tolls on the road than would have been, had these difficulties not existed; while the expenses would have been but little more.

There was transported over the road by motive power from May 17th to December 23d, 1840, inclusive, 15,373 tons of anthracite coal: 265,052 lbs. flour, pork, beef, potatoes, &c., 371 perches stone: 36, 155 feet of lumber: 2,007 bushels lime, grain and seed: 1,805 passengers twenty miles: 296, twelve miles: 29 eleven miles: 625 eight miles and 583 six miles, making a total of 3,355 passengers. The amount received for all the transportation during the last year was eleven thousand one hundred and eighty-seven dollars sixty-

two cents. This sum was sufficient to meet all current expenses ; to keep the road, cars, &c., in good order ; and to pay the extraordinary expences incurred for repairing the engines, cars, road and bridges before operations could be commenced in the spring, and which were not chargeable to this year's business : but for these extra expenses, and the interruptions in the navigation of the canals, there would have been a handsome balance ; enough it is believed to have paid most of the debts. We hope we shall be enabled to discharge these debts from the profits of the next year.

Exertions have been made to keep the road, engines and cars in good repair, and as we shall be ready by the first opening of the navigation to commence operations, we may reasonably calculate that the receipts will be more than double next year. We are strengthened in this belief from the fact that the coal of the Shamokin Basin has been distributed along the waters of the Susquehanna from Sunbury to Baltimore, and all who have used it attest its good qualities.

Baltimore, which has hitherto had its supply from Philadelphia, can now receive it from Shamokin at as cheap a rate as it is delivered at the latter city, and it is believed will require for the present year, three times as much for consumption as was sent during the past.

The smelting of iron with anthracite coal has already given an impulse to the trade on this road. The immense masses of iron ore discovered on Monteur's

Ridge, and this ore of the very best and most approved quality, has demonstrated this region to be the one of all others, the best adapted for the making and manufacturing of iron in all its variety of forms. The proximity of the Shamokin Coal Basin to Monteur's Ridge, and the connection of the two by the Danville and Pottsville rail road, not only renders the location eligible for furnaces, but makes it certain that the West end of the road must do a business that will produce a large revenue; for whether you take the coal to the ore, or the ore to the coal, it must pass over this section of the road: as it has been found most advantageous, the ore will be taken to the coal: this will cause an immense tonnage up the road, furnishing as much back freight as the returning coal cars can bring; thus giving tonnage perhaps quite equal both ways; while the re-transportation of the pig or manufactured iron either to Philadelphia, by Pottsville, or to Sunbury for the Western or Baltimore market, will swell the income of the rail road beyond the amount of any former estimate.

One furnace of large dimensions has already been erected at the town of Shomokin, and will go into blast early in the spring. This furnace will require seven thousand five hundred tons of ore per year, and its proprietors have already contracted for its delivery at Sunbury during the season. In return for this ore they have also contracted to send the same number of tons of coal to Danville; thus making a transit of fifteen thousand tons over the road from this single

establishment ; being nearly equal to all the tonnage of last year, and is independent of all the down river trade. Three furnaces in addition and a rolling mill will probably be built during the present year. These four furnaces will require thirty thousand tons of ore, which will pay in tolls to the Rail Road Company for ore alone eighteen thousand dollars, and if the iron be sent to Sunbury, five thousand seven hundred and sixty dollars extra, making the sum of twenty-three thousand seven hundred and sixty dollars from these furnaces alone, without taking into the account the limestone which will be carried over a part of the road, and the increased number of passengers which such establishments must necessarily bring.

If the road was finished to Pottsville and the iron sent to Philadelphia instead of to Baltimore, the toll would be proportionally increased, as it would necessarily be conveyed further on our rail road.

I believe that it is admitted by all who are acquainted with the several anthracite coal fields in Pennsylvania, that none surpasses, if any equals, the middle field, and that this rail road passes through one of the richest districts known, whether we take into consideration quantity, quality, or the facility of mining, as well as the height of the hills or mountains above water level. Take the whole line from "Montgomery" (on the Girard Estate) to the gap of the "Big Mountain" on the Shamokin Creek, and I presume you will find a greater quantity of coal above

water level than is to be found in any other space of equal extent. In the same district is found extensive beds or veins of iron ore of good quality, which no doubt will be found suitable for many kinds of iron. Take this in connection with Monteur's Ridge ore and it will not require much imagination to conceive this whole region along the line of rail road spotted with furnaces and other works for the manufacture of iron, and covered with a dense, prosperous and happy population.

The mineral riches of the country through which this road traverses for miles must alone render its stock one of the most profitable investments. In addition to its local advantages it is certainly the nearest and most direct route from the Metropolis to the north west part of our state, both by the rail road from Sunbury to Erie which has been projected; by the West Branch Canal, now in operation to Forrandsville; by the Bald Eagle Canal, now finished to within a few miles of Bellfont; by the Williamsport and Elmira rail road, now finished and travelled to Ralston; thence a few intermediate miles to Blossburgh; and thence by a finished rail road to Corning where it connects with the improvements of the state of New York, which, with their ramifications communicate with the great lakes, as well as with the western and central region of that state, and with the New York and Erie rail road, now in progress. It will thus be seen that

it is not only in the most direct route to the north west portions of our own state, but that it is also the nearest and best route to Buffalo, in the state of New York, and that with only a few intermediate miles the whole line is nearly finished. A survey was completed by direction of the State during the last season up the West Branch to the Bald Eagle, and thence up the north side of the Bald Eagle Mountain over the Alleghany Mountain, and it was found that a rail road could be made by this route to Pittsburgh, without a plane. As all these improvements, as well from the West Branch as from the North Branch of the Susquehanna, whether finished or projected, come directly to the west end of our road, and this road the most direct and shortest route to Philadelphia and the seaboard, can we do other than believe that it must and will be as important a link in the great chain of internal communication, as any in the United States? As soon as the Reading and Pottsville road is finished it will command nearly all the passengers and much of the light merchandise to and from the North West to Philadelphia. The fact that eighteen hundred passengers (exclusive of way passengers) were conveyed over that portion of the road between Shamokin and Sunbury shows that the community begin to appreciate this route. To the citizens of Philadelphia it is of peculiar importance, not only as regards their great interest in the Girard Estates, but as furnishing facilities for the transit of their goods

to the North, the North West and the West, at *all seasons of the year*, without interruptions from frost, freshets, breaches, or droughts, and of receiving produce in return; thus, with these striking advantages, diverting the trade from other channels—I feel assured that the true interests of the city ought not to permit another season to elapse before furnishing the requisite means to finish the few intermediate miles of this important road. The State also, being deeply interested, must find it their interest to make the necessary appropriation to connect the two sections, by which means the Commonwealth would very soon cease paying the large interest guaranteed to the loan holders.

The only objection ever urged against this road has been to the inclined planes, on the East end of it. When I took charge of the road I felt these objections very strongly; but after carefully examining the subject, and with seven months experience, I am satisfied that for the transit of heavy burthen, both ways, *our* level road with planes is decidedly better and can be worked cheaper than if the road had been made with heavy grades without inclines. For passengers only such grades may frequently be preferable; but, (after the connection with the Pottsville, Reading and Philadelphia rail road, and the completion of our own work) should it be found inconvenient to use the planes, a short stage ride over the Broad

Mountain would connect the line where the rail road crosses the turnpike on the side of Locust Mountain.

In every view of the subject, either as regards investment or advantage to State and City, there is great inducement for prompt exertions to obtain the means to complete the few intermediate miles ; and I cannot too strongly recommend to the Board of Managers to make an early appeal to the Legislature and to the City Councils, believing that the great importance of this improvenent must command their attention.

I am very respectfully,

SAMUEL R. WOOD,
Acting Manager.

January 28th, 1841.

